COVER STORY

Files fill gaps, buffs clamor for still more

Brother wrote of Oswald's eyes: 'There was no guilt, no shame, no nothing'

By Tony Mauro
USA TODAY

From the yellowing pages of thousands of government files released Monday, the haunting face of JFK assassin Lee Harvey Oswald appears in shadowy glimpses.

There is the confident face of Oswald the defector, seen in a 1959 snapshot from Soviet Minsk found among his personal effects. Another photo shows Oswald the father smiling as wife Marina holds baby daughter June.

And there is the innocent face of Oswald, described by his brother Robert who visited him in jail soon after his arrest for killing John F. Kennedy in Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963.

"All the time we were talking, I searched his eyes for any

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sign of guilt," Robert Oswald wrote in his diary, released Monday. "There was no guilt, no shame, no nothing."

The full picture of Lee Harvey Oswald — and of the assassination itself — may never emerge, even 30 years after.

But the 900,000 pages made public Monday make a tantalizing start at filling gaps that have nagged at — and fascinated — Americans long before the movie *JFK* created a public demand for their release.

Included in the documents are new details about Oswald's visit to Mexico City less than a month before the assassination, his suicide attempt in the former Soviet Union, and his KGB connections during his three years there.

One Soviet defector quoted in the files, Peter Deryabin, argued the assassination was instigated by the KGB to relieve internal pressures on then-Soviet leader Nikita Khruschev.

Another defector quoted in the papers, Yuri Nosenko, claimed the KGB knew little of Oswald — and cared less.

"Oswald was not regarded by the KGB as being completely normal mentally, nor was he considered to be very intelligent," said Nosenko, who interviewed Oswald after the ex-Marine sought to defect in Moscow.

Debate over Nosenko's credibility created strife within the CIA for years.

Former CIA official Vincent Cannistraro discounts Deryabin's credibility as well. "He had no inside information," Cannistraro says. "All he was doing was speculating."

Rejected as a defector, Oswald slashed his wrists, but was rescued and given a job at a radio factory in Minsk. He returned to the United States in 1962, and turned up in Mexico City before the assassination, visiting the Soviet and Cuban consulates.

Dozens of assassination buffs, historians and journalists swarmed over the files at the National Archives Monday, looking for revelations amid the retreads — many of the documents have been made public in some form before.

Still, Kennedy experts and theorists thirst for more.

"The things we really wanted to zero-in on are not here," says Dan Alcorn of the Assassination Archives and Research Center.

Missing files that some say might shed light on alleged links between the CIA, the Mafia and proposed assassinations of foreign leaders.

James Lesar, also with the assassination archive group, claims as many as 2 million more assassination documents have yet to be released.

"Chances are the records that have been withheld are much more important," says Lesar.

The 1992 law that forced government agencies — including presidential libraries and congressional committees — to open their files, also created a five-member panel to

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Oswald vignettes abound